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IN A

Visitation-SERMON

PREACH'D AT

PUTNEY, May 5, 1719, &c.

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By FR. HARE, D.D. Rector of *Barnes*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

The Third Edition Corrected.

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THE PREFACE.

TO meddle in a Controversy that has been so long on Foot, and after so many able Pens, wants an Excuse so much, that I cannot let this Sermon go Abroad without assuring the Reader, that it is very much against my own Inclination, and purely in Compliance with the Importunity of those that heard it, who desired it might be Printed, in a Manner not to be denied.

They who consider this as a Visitation-Sermon, and know the Author, will not wonder either at the Choice of the Subject, or the Side I have taken in it: For though I shall ever be an Enemy to Persecution, and cannot think it equitable in the Governours of the Church to take the utmost Advantage of severe Laws a-

gainst

gainſt innocent well-meaning People, while they continue ſuch; much leſs to call in the ſecular Arm, to oppreſs and cruſh under its Weight vertuous and learned Men, for the Miſtakes their diſintereſted Purſuits of Truth and Knowledge may happen to lead them into; though I am very free to own my ſelf to be in theſe Sentiments, in which I would hope I have the Senſe of all wiſe and good Men with me; yet I can by no Means come into the Notions of thoſe Gentlemen, who declare againſt all Authority in the Church, and all Eſtabliſhments of Religion by the State, which they would make the World believe are utterly inconſiſtent with right Reaſon, juſt Liberty and true Religion, contrary to the Will of Chriſt, and deſtructive of the Faith and Doctrine taught by him. But to me the Reverſe of all this ſeems to be the Truth; That Authority and Government, whether in Church or State, in Matters of Religion are abſolutely neceſſary to preſerve Peace and Order, to keep Liberty from Degenerating into Licentiouſneſs, to protect the Church and the Truths taught in it from its Enemies of all Kinds, whether

their secret or professed; and perfectly agreeable to the Will of God, who expects and requires it at the Hands of his Vicegerents, that they should protect true Religion, and be Nursing-Fathers to the Church.

To assert that Establishments in general are unrighteous and unreasonable, is, in my humble Opinion, so wild a Notion, that the more I think of it, the more difficult it is to reconcile it in any View to good Sense; it seems not only to proceed from a total Ignorance of human Nature, and to contradict the Sense of Mankind in all Ages, but to reflect infinite Dishonour upon God himself, as the Author and Institutor of the *Jewish* Government: And as to our own Establishment in particular, 'tis so far from weakning the Protestant Religion, as oppos'd to Popery; that 'tis, I think, evident to a Demonstration, that it is the great Support and Preservation of it; which, unless it had the Gift of Miracles, without an Establishment could no more defend it self against the United Strength and Zeal of Popery, than a disconcerted Rabble could

could stand against a well disciplined Army.

But in this Discourse the Reader has my Thoughts only as to the Power and Authority of the Ministers and Governours of the Church, and that as it appears upon the Face of Scripture, without any Regard to Modern Systems; in which, I hope, I have advanced nothing but what will be found to be well grounded; and then it will not fail of the Approbation of competent and equitable Judges; and for the rest I am in no Pain. But whether my Thoughts on this Subject are right or not, I cannot set them in a fuller Light than I have, and therefore shall leave them to take their Fate; with this Satisfaction, that I have said nothing to serve a Turn, but have asserted throughout, what appeared to me to be true, whether it were necessary for the Cause I maintain or not; which as to one Point, the *Invisibility* of the Church, will be acknowledged by all who have read what the Ingenious Author of the *Visible and Invisible Church* has written upon that Subject;

ject; who, in Compliance with our Adversaries, has very usefully considered the Church as an *Invisible* Society, and to so good Purpose, that he has quite disarmed them of all the Advantage they could hope to make of it, and shewn at large that it can do them no Service.

Those who may not like the Matter of this Discourse, will, I hope, find little in the Manner of it to offend them; for though I cannot but own my self filled with Indignation and Astonishment at the loose Principles of some Writers, the extravagant Liberties they have taken in Defence of them, their Perversion of Scripture, their Contempt of Antiquity, and their rude Treatment of our Constitution; I have suppressed those Resentments all I could, and confined my self to the Argument, that I might not offend where I cannot please; which, in all Disputes, is the first Step towards convincing those who differ from us.

I make no Excuse for the Length of this Discourse to those who did not hear it, who may read as little of it at a Time

as they pleaſe; for which Reaſon I have taken the Liberty to make it a little longer than it was, by the Inſertion of a few Lines in two or three Places, and the Addition of a few Notes, which to the leſs Learned I thought might be of Uſe.

N. B. It may perhaps be of Service to obſerve to ſuch Enemies of Church Power, as are otherwiſe Friends to Virtue and Religion, how much they are miſtaken, when they think it claims to the Miniſters of Chriſt a Power to act *arbitrarily* and at Pleaſure, and by their own Authority, in their diſpenſing the Myſteries of the Goſpel, and their Application of Church-Cenſures, in which View 'tis no Wonder they are no Friends to it: Whereas in Truth every Part of this Notion is pure Miſtake. The Miniſters of Chriſt can do nothing, as ſuch, in their own Name, but in his, nor at their own Pleaſure, but as he has willed and commanded they ſhould do; ſo that every Act of *Power* in them is really an Act of *Duty*: And they are either wanting in their Duty or offend againſt it, whenever they do not on proper Occaſions execute the Powers committed to them, or act in the Execution of them otherwiſe than their Commiſſion directs they ſhould. They who will fairly conſider Church-Power in this View, which is the only true one, will ſee how widely it differs from *Civil* Power, and will find nothing in it that can juſtly give Offence.

Hebrews,

Hebrews, *Chap.* xiii. *Ver.* 17.

Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves.

THE Scripture, conſidered as a Rule and Judge of Controverſy, though appealed to by all Sides, is rarely ſubmitted to by any with that Impartiality and Deference of Judgment that is due to it, and which they expect ſhould be paid it by their Adverſaries. They go to the Scripture not to learn from thence, what or whoſe Opinions are trueſt, but how they may beſt defend their own. If all Sides were not more or leſs guilty of this, it is impoſſible the Chriſtian World, the reformed Parts of it at leaſt, could ſo long continue divided upon ſo many Points, as we ſee and lament they do.

But what is more ſtrange, this Rule has been by none leſs followed, or more perverted, than by thoſe who pretend moſt to a ſtrict and cloſe Adherence to it; ſo cloſe, that all other Rules and Guides, living or dead, ancient or modern, Fathers and Councils, even the primitive and earlieſt Writers of the Church, are not only neglected by them and treated with Contempt, as

perfectly uſeleſs and inſignificant; but thoſe who preſume to ſpeak in their Favour, or to make uſe of their Authority, are ſeverely cenſured, as forgetting their Duty to the Scripture, and derogating from its Authority in Proportion to the Regard they expreſs for any of them, though not in Oppoſition to the ſacred Writings, but in Subordination and in Aid of them.

Such is ſome Mens Zeal for Scripture, and yet none appear to be leſs governed by it in the Opinions they chooſe to be diſtinguiſhed by. The *Socinians*, in their Method of Controverſy, are a flagrant Inſtance of this; who cannot be thought to have thrown off all Regard to all other Rules and Guides, purely out of Submiſſion and Deference to the Scriptures; but becauſe they knew they were all ſo many Witneſſes againſt them; and that when the Scriptures ſtood alone, unſupported by the Evidence, that all Ages of the Church, from the very Beginning, have given to them, 'twas the eaſier to diſpute their Meaning, and to wreſt them to their own Senſe. The Authority of the Scriptures ſeems to have been cried up by theſe Men with no other View, but that by ſtanding alone the Senſe of them might the more effectually be undermined. This at leaſt, in fact, has proved the Caſe, whatever were their Intention.

But, for an Inſtance, how little Men are ſometimes guided by Scripture, who are loudeſt for a ſtrict Adherence to it, and affect to take it as it were into their peculiar Patronage, as its only Friends, we need go no farther than to the Diſputes that have been of late, and are ſtill agi-

tated with ſo much Heat concerning Church-Authority; which, though it have the Practice of the Univerſal Church in all Times on its Side, has been oppoſed with that Aſſurance on one Hand, and with that profeſſed Regard to the Scriptures on the other, that one would think there could not be found in them the leaſt Foot-ſteps of any thing in favour of it; much leſs ſuch expreſs and plain Words as thoſe I have now read to you, *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves:* Words which ſo fully contain the Relation of Superiours and Inferiours, and ſo ſtrongly command the Submiſſion of one to the other, that did not the Circumſtances of the Place ſhew the contrary, they might well be thought to be meant of the Obedience due to the Civil Powers, a Duty frequently commanded in Scripture, but no where in Terms more ſignificant; for οἱ ἡγούμενοι, either by it ſelf, or, as 'tis put no leſs than three times in this Chapter, with a Genitive after it, does moſt properly ſignify Governours, or thoſe that have the Rule over us. 'Tis indeed in two of the Places rendered in the Margin by *Guide*, and *being Guides*, to expreſs either the Nature of the Rule here meant, or to diſclaim more effectually the uſurped Powers of the Church of *Rome*, which of Right belong ſolely to our Civil Governours: But whatever be the Difference between Eccleſiaſtical and Civil Power, nothing can be inferred to the Diminution of the former from this Term, which is often uſed by the beſt Writers to expreſs Governours, and thoſe not of the inferiour Sort, but ſuch in whom the ſupreme Authority is lodged.

And

And that it is taken in as large a Senſe in Scripture, we have many Inſtances in the Old Teſtament; where the Tranſlators have uſed it to expreſs Rulers of all Kinds, Kings, Princes, Judges, and Captains; as well as Heads of Tribes, Courſes, and Houſes. And as the Style of the Apocryphal Books is of good Uſe for the Underſtanding that of the New Teſtament, it may not be improper to take Notice, that there alſo the Word frequently occurs in the Senſe of a Governour; and that in *the Wiſdom of the Son of Sirach* we have not only ἡγέμονες λαῦ, but ἡγέμονες ἐκκλησίας, xxxiii. 18. *Hear me, O ye great men of the people, and hearken ye rulers of the Congregation.* But what is moſt to our Purpoſe to obſerve, is, that the ſame Word is uſed by our Saviour himſelf to his Diſciples, *Luke* xxii. 26. where, ſhewing the Difference he would have between them and Civil Governours, he ſays, *But ye ſhall not be ſo: But he that is greateſt among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth ſerve.* Καὶ ὁ ἡγούμενος, ὡς ὁ διακονῶν. where the Oppoſition plainly ſhews, that ὁ ἡγούμενος is he that rules, and has the chief Authority.

Nothing therefore can be drawn to the Derogation of Church-Power, or Authority, from the Apoſtle's making uſe of this Term to expreſs Superiours in the Church rather than any other. But if a Doubt could be made of the Senſe of the Word taken by it ſelf, the other Words 'tis joined with, put the Meaning of it here paſt diſpute: *Obey them and ſubmit your ſelves* to them. *To them* indeed is not expreſſed, but is neceſſarily underſtood from the former Part of the Sentence,

Obey them, and ſubmit your ſelves: To whom? No doubt, to them. But to obey and ſubmit our ſelves to others as Matter of Duty, muſt be allowed to ſuppoſe thoſe others to be our Superiours, and to have a Right to our Obedience. Otherwiſe the Apoſtle's Precept would come to this, "I require you to obey thoſe to whom you "owe no Obedience, and to ſubmit to thoſe to "whom no Submiſſion is due; whom I call indeed your Rulers, though they have no Authority to rule over you; and your Guides, "though you are perfectly at Liberty whether "you will follow them or not; and have as "good a Right to lead them, as to be led by "them. The Direction and Authority they claim, "is mere Uſurpation; without any Foundation "in the Word of God, or the Inſtitution of Chriſt; "yet ſuch Rulers, ſuch Guides I require you to "obey, and ſubmit your ſelves to". At this Rate muſt Men make an inſpired Writer talk, if they will not allow Perſons to whom Obedience is here required, to be properly Governours, inveſted with a real Authority from Chriſt to rule his Church.

For the Word we render *obey*, is very juſtly ſo rendered, as appears by the Uſe of it in ſeveral other Places. Thus 'tis uſed twice together, *Acts* v. 36, 37. *before thoſe Days roſe up Theudas*——*to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themſelves: Who was ſlain, and all, as many as* obeyed *him, were ſcattered, and brought to nought.* πάντες ὅσοι ἐπείθοντο αὐτῷ. *After this Man roſe up Judas.*——*he alſo periſhed, and all, even as many as* obeyed *him,* ἐπείθοντο αὐτῷ, *were diſperſed.*

Will

Will it be ſaid, that ἐπείθοντο in theſe Places does not properly ſignify *obeyed*, but ſuffered themſelves to be perſwaded by them? Let us hear St. *James* iii. 3. *Behold, we put bits in the horſes mouths*; ſtrong Bits, not perſuaſive Arguments, but to what End? *That they may obey us.* πρὸς τὸ πείθεσθαι αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν. Nor is any thing more common than this Senſe of the Word in other Writers, and ſtill leſs Room is there, if poſſible, to diſpute the Meaning of the other Word, ὑπείκετε, which can ſignify nothing but to ſubmit or yield Obedience to another; but Submiſſion and Obedience on one Side, neceſſarily ſuppoſe Power and Authority on the other. This Text then is a full Declaration of Order and Government in the Church; and 'tis the Right of ſome, commiſſioned thereto, to rule, govern and direct; and the Duty of others to be ruled, governed and directed; that is, to pay Obedience and Submiſſion to them; for that theſe Words relate to Church-Rulers and Guides, and the Submiſſion due to them, is too evident to be denied from the Deſcription given of them in the Words following, *for they watch for your Souls*; which is the proper Character of Paſtors, whoſe immediate Buſineſs it is to take Care of the ſpiritual Welfare of thoſe committed to them. If any who diſlike a Term ſo expreſſive of Submiſſion as ὑπείκετε, ſhall pretend, that becauſe 'tis no where elſe found in the Scriptures, either of the Old or New Teſtament, it ought to be ſuſpected to be a Miſtake of the Copiſt, and that probably the true reading is ὑπακούετε; I anſwer, that though that be not improbable as a Conjecture, yet it

has

has no Copy to support it; and if it had, would do them no Service: Since no Term is so often used in Scripture to express Obedience, as ὑπακούειν; the Examples are so many as to make it needless to mention any.

But the Point I am now maintaining, the Authority of Church-Governours, depends not on a single Text, as indeed I think no Point of any Consequence can be supposed to do; it has the whole Tenour and Language of the Scriptures on its Side. All the Words implying Obedience are made use of to express the Duty of the People to their spiritual Governours: πείθεσθε we have here in the Text; ὑπακούειν, which St. *Paul* frequently uses to express Obedience to the Faith, to the Gospel, to the Truth; is also made use of by him to signify the Obedience due to himself, as a Minister of that Gospel, a Teacher of that Faith and Truth; thus, *Phil.* ii. 12. *Wherefore my beloved, as ye have always obeyed,* καθὼς πάντοτε ὑπηκούσατε, *not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.* And 2 *Thes.* iii. 14. *If any man obey not our Word by this Epistle,* εἰ δέ τις οὐχ ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν, *note that man.* Another Word expressing Subjection is ὑποτάσσεσθαι; and this both St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* use to express the Subject's Duty to the Civil Magistrate, *Rom.* xiii. 1. and 1 *Pet.* ii. 13. And the same Apostles have made Choice of the same Word in their Injunctions to the Brethren to obey the Ministers of the Gospel, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 16. and 1 *Pet.* v. 5. There is indeed one other Word to signify Obedience once used by St. *Paul*, *Tit.* iii. 1. and that is πειθαρχεῖν; which if it be not applied to the Submission due to Church-Governours, so neither could it in the full Import of

it; it being a compound Word, which not only denotes Obedience, but the Object also to which 'tis due, the Civil Powers; for they are always meant by ἀρχαὶ and ἐξουσίαι in the New Testament, unless when speaking of the invisible Powers of the other World. After Words so fully expressing Obedience, 'tis scarce worth observing to you the Respect the People are supposed to have for those who have this Rule over them; that they are required ἐντίμους ἔχειν, *to have them in Honour* as dear to them, *Phil.* ii. 29. and ἡγεῖσθαι ὑπὲρ ἐκπερισσοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ, *to esteem them very highly in Love*, 1 *Thess.* v. 13.

And as the Peoples Duty to their Teachers and spiritual Governours is thus signified by a Variety of Terms most expressive of Obedience, so are those to whom this Obedience is due, called by Names that plainly and undeniably carry in them Power and Authority; such as ἡγούμενοι, ἀρχηγὸς, ἀρχισυνάγωγοι, πρεσβύτεροι, διδάσκαλοι, ποιμένες, ἐπίσκοποι; the three last of which are applied also to our Saviour, and two of them by himself. And when they act in Pursuance of their Office, they are said διδάσκειν, ποιμαίνειν, ἐπισκοπεῖν, διατάσσειν, παραγγέλλειν, Words all implying Authority and Government; but most of them Care and Diligence and Labour also on the Part of those entrusted with it. The Apostles indeed do often, or rather, generally use a Word that does not strictly carry any Power in it, and that is παρακαλεῖν, to beseech, exhort, or advise. But this must be considered, as expressing the Greatness of their Modesty, and the Gentleness of their Conduct, not the small Extent of their Authority; which is not the less in it self, or the less effectual

effectual for being exerted in ſoft and gentle Words. When there was Occaſion, they knew how to change their Style, and ſpeak in other Terms; they ſhew they have a Right, ἐλέγχειν, ἐλέγχειν ἀποτόμως, ἐλέγχειν μὴ πάσης ἐπιεικείας, νουθετεῖν, ἐπιτιμᾶν, χρῆσθαι ἀποτόμως, παιδεύειν, ἐπιστόμιζειν, μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν, which laſt Expreſſion amounts to the moſt authoritative Prohibition. And St. *Paul* more than once ſpeaks of the ἐξουσία or *Power* Chriſt had given him, of his coming with a *Rod*, of his deſigning ῥάβδῳ ἐλθεῖν καὶ πολεμῆσαι ἐπὶ τινας, of his having in Readineſs ἐκδικῆσαι πᾶσαν παρακοήν, to revenge every Diſobedience. This Language St. *Paul* uſes, not only in ſupport of his own Authority, but in his Inſtructions to *Timothy* and *Titus*, whom he had ſet over the Churches of *Epheſus* and *Crete*.

Nay farther, St. *Paul* expreſſly aſſerts to the Church a Power to *judge* its Members, and reproves the *Corinthians* for not having done it in the Caſe of the inceſtuous Perſon, 1 *Cor.* v. This indeed is ſtrongly denied by the Oppoſers of Church-Authority; they tell us nothing here is meant, but what every private Man has a Right to do, nay cannot but do, take Notice of the Behaviour of a diſorderly Brother, and judge him to be what he is. But what can be more trifling than ſuch an Explication, or more contrary to St. *Paul*'s Meaning? He tells the *Corinthians*, that when he wrote to them, *not to keep Company with Fornicators*, he did not mean the Fornicators of the World, but thoſe among the Brethren that were ſo: That this was his Meaning; for that he had nothing to do to judge them that were without the Church; thoſe he leaves to

the Judgment of God; but for those who were within, it was his and their Business to judge them, and to put away the wicked from among them. (a) *For what have I to do*, says he, *to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? but them that are without, God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among your selves that wicked person.* 1 *Cor.* v. 12, 13. By judging, here is evidently meant such an Authoritative Act, as they had no Right to exercise over those who were without the Church; and as for those that were within, it had in the last Resort so real an Effect, as to excommunicate and put out from among them, the Person who deserved to be so judged. And this was the highest Act of Authority Governours could exert, who had not the Power of the Sword, nor any Share in the Civil Judicature; Their Censures could go no farther, otherwise than as God was pleased to second the just Censures of his Church, and the Prayers with which they were accompanied, with Judgments from himself; which seem indeed ordinarily to have followed in a very visible and sensible manner, upon *delivering an Offender to Satan* in the first Ages. For as to the Expression it self, I see not but that it may properly be pronounced upon any Person deservedly cut off from the

(a) If this Passage were pointed in the Original, as I cannot but think it should, and, as it appears by *Theophylact*, it was in some Copies, it should be translated thus: *For what? Have I any thing to do to judge them also that are without? No, Judge ye them that are within, them that are without God judgeth,* (or will judge, for there are many Authorities for χρινει) *and take away the wicked one from among you.*

the Body of Christ; he is no longer under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the instituted Means of Grace, but is delivered over to the *Evil one*, to suffer the Punishment due to his Sins, in such Degree and Manner as God shall think fit.

No body can think any of these Expressions carry the Authority of the Church too high, or that the Apostles claimed either for themselves or those sent by them, greater Powers than belonged to them, who considers either their singular Humility and Piety, or the Commission our Saviour gave them in the Power of the *Keys*, the Power of *binding* and *loosing*, and the Power of *remitting* and *retaining* Sins. The Disputes about the precise Meaning of these Commissions are so many, that I cannot pretend at present so much as to enumerate them. I shall only observe, that the Power of the *Keys*, if we will allow the Scripture to be the best Interpreter of its own Language, cannot but be supposed to imply a very great Commission and Authority: Since in *Isaiah* xxii. 22. we find a Promise from God to make *Eliakim* first Minister under King *Hezekiah*, thus expressed, *I will commit the government into his hand, and he shall be a Father to the house of Judah*; and the Key of the House of David *will I lay upon his shoulder: So he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open.* And in Allusion, no doubt, to this Passage, the Power with which Christ upon his Resurrection was invested by the Father, is described under the same Image, *Apoc.* iii. 7. *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the* KEY OF DAVID, *he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth*

teth and no man openeth. And he that hath the *Key* of *David*, the ſame, *Apoc.* i. 18. is ſaid to have the *Keys of Hell and Death.*

Now he that ſees the Supreme Power of Chriſt thus expreſſed by himſelf, will have Reaſon to think, no little Degree of Power is meant to be given to the Miniſters of Chriſt, when given to them by himſelf under the ſame Figure. But take the Power of the *Keys* in the loweſt Senſe that can be, it muſt at leaſt imply an Authority to admit Perſons into the Church by Baptiſm; and in order to that, a Power of judging of their Fitneſs for it, of giving them Inſtructions, and declaring the neceſſary Conditions of it; and to keep out thoſe who are not fit to be admitted. And it ſeems but a juſt and neceſſary Conſequence of ſuch a Power, to have Authority to put out of the Church ſuch Perſons, when admitted, who ought not to have been admitted, had it been known what they would have proved, or ſuch as renounce the Conditions upon which they came into it.

As to the Power of *binding* and *looſing*, 'tis made a great Doubt, whether it relate to what is Analogous to *Legiſlation* or to *Juriſdiction*; I ſay Analogous, becauſe *Legiſlation* and *Juriſdiction* are properly Civil Terms. Thoſe who were no Friends to Church-Power themſelves, or wrote in Times and Places that did not favour it, have inclined to the firſt Senſe, and think our Saviour in theſe Words gave the Apoſtles a Power of (*b*) retaining

(*b*) His Chriſti verbis iis (Apoſtolis) commiſſum eſt, dirigente Spiritu Sancto, ut de Religione decernerent, quoad uſum aut rejectionem rituum & judiciorum Moſaicorum, idque vel in tempus, vel in perpetuum. *Lightf. in locum.*

ing or abolishing such Parts of the Jewish Law, as they should think fit: And this Sense has been greedily embraced by the late Writers against Church-Authority. But besides (c) many other Reasons against this Explication of the Power given to St. *Peter*, and in him to the rest of the Apostles, *Matt.* xvi. the like Passage in *Matt.* xviii. is generally confessed to relate not to Things but Persons; and that is a very great Presumption it does

(c) 1*st*. The *Binding* and *Loosing* used by the Jewish Doctors, which is the whole Ground of this Explication, was a very different thing from what it is here brought to prove. For they did not assume to themselves a Power to dispense with, or to annul any thing that was clearly commanded by any Law of *Moses*, but to explain the Sense of them, and to decide the Questions that should arise *de licitis aut non licitis in lege*, which are *Lightfoot*'s own Words, to determine what Persons, at what Times, in what Circumstances, to what Degree, and to what Actions, *&c.* a Law obliged or did not oblige; and upon these Points their Doctors often differed, though all agreed in acknowledging the Authority and Force of the Laws. Now this certainly is very different from a Power to abrogate the Laws themselves, the Point here contended for.

2*dly*, Nothing can be more contrary to the whole Conduct of our Saviour, while on Earth, than this Interpretation. He declared on all Occasions, that he came not to *destroy* the Law, but to *fulfil* it. He was very exact in observing himself, and obliging others to observe every the least Command of it; and there was nothing he avoided with more Care, than to give a Jealousy to the Jews that he had such a Design, as he is supposed to have declared to his Apostles in these Words.

3*dly*, The abrogating of the *Ceremonial* Part of the Jewish Law seems to have been one of the things which the Disciples as yet were not able to bear, *Joh.* xvi. 12. And 'tis plain from several Places in the *Acts*, particularly xxi. 20. that they had not the least Apprehension of this being our Saviour's Meaning, neither when he spoke these Words, nor for several Years after his Death.

4*thly*, The Truth is, that at last when the *judicial* and *ceremonial* Parts of the Law were to cease, they rather expired of themselves upon the Destruction of the City and Temple, which was a total Dissolution of the Jewish Polity, than were abrogated by any Authoritative Declaration, or Act of the Apostles. Nothing remained but Synagogue-Worship, which being of human Institution, did not want a divine Commission, either to alter or put an End to it.

does so in the other? And if that will be allowed to be of any Weight, the antient Writers of the Christian Church do not appear to have ever understood it otherwise. And that the Words *binding* and *loosing* are capable of such a Sense in the Mouth of a Jewish Writer, is evident from a very remarkable Passage in (d) *Josephus*, which indeed did not escape the Diligence of Mr. *Selden*, but the Cause he was writing for led him quite besides the true Meaning of it. But what greatly confirms this to be the Meaning of this Power here, as 'tis joined to that of the *Keys*, is, that we have much the same Image, though not just to the same Sense, *Apoc.* xx. 1. where St. *John* says he *saw an Angel come down from heaven, having the* Key *of the bottomless Pit, and a great* Chain *in his hand.* As a *Key* represents the Power of *opening* and *shutting*, so does a *Chain* that of *binding* and *loosing*: And he who has

(d) *Josephus*, l. 1. c 4. *de Bell. Jud.* speaking of the great Advantage the Pharisees made of the Piety of Queen *Alexandra*, to whom her Husband upon his Death left the Government, says, they insinuated themselves so far into her Favour, and got that Ascendant over her, that they engrossed the whole Government in a manner to themselves, and did what they would; they could *banish or recall from Banishment, imprison or set at Liberty* whom they would: And their Power did not stop here; for a little lower he says, They could even put whom they would to Death, and no body's Life was safe from their Resentments. His Words are these; Οἱ δὲ τὴν ἀπλότητα τῆς ἀνθρώπου κατὰ μικρὸν ὑποβολῆς ἤδη καὶ δόλου τοῖς ὅλων ἐπίγνοντο, δύνασθαι τε καὶ κατάγειν εἰς ἐπίλυσιν, (which might have been properly enough expressed, by ascribing to them the Power of the *Keys*,) ΑΝΕΙΝ τε καὶ ΔΕΙΝ. Καθόλου δ' αἱ μὲν ἀπολαύσεις τῆς βασιλείας, ἐκείνων ἦσαν· Τὰ δὲ ἀναλώματα καὶ αἱ λυπήσεις τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρας. And a little lower, ἐκράτει δὲ τῆς μὲν ἄλλης αὐτὴ, φαρισαῖοι δ' αὐτῆς ΛΥΕΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΔΕΙΝ, &c. Mr. *Selden* following the Latin Version translates thus, *Summovendo & deponendo quos vellent*, intirely mistaking the Sense of the Greek, *solvendo item & ligando*; then adds, *quod de arbitraria eorum legis, juxta jam dicta, interpretatione sumi potest.* Which is so tenderly expressed, as plainly to shew, he was conscious he put a Force upon the Words; and was afraid of a *sumi non potest.*

has Authority to deliver an Offender to Satan to be bound, that is, to be his Priſoner (*e*) and to be tormented by him, (for it was then the common Practice to put Priſoners into Chains, and give them corporal Puniſhment, whence Jailers are called Tormentors, *Matt.* xviii. 34.) is properly ſaid to bind that Perſon; and to looſe him when the Sentence is taken off, and the Offender releaſed from the Power of the *Evil one*, and the Chains in which he held him.

As to the Power of *remitting* and *retaining* Sins given to the Apoſtles, *Joh.* xx. 23. our Adverſaries themſelves acknowledge it to be a very great one in the obvious Senſe of the Words; elſe they would not be at ſo much Pains to look out for other Meanings, and contend ſo warmly as they do, that it was ſomething appropriated to the Apoſtles. But there is no need for ſuch a Suppoſition; nothing hinders but that the Power here given to

(e) That the evil Spirits were the great Tormenters of Mankind, we have the Teſtimony of all the antient Church-Writers. *Lamoniri, irrepentes etiam corporibus occulte, ut Spiritus tenues, morbos fingunt, terrent mentes, membra diſtorquent, ut ad cultum ſui cogant; ut nidore altarium, vel hoſtiis pecudum ſaginati, REMISSIS QUÆ CONSTRINXERANT, curaſſe videantur.* *Min. Fel.* And *Cyprian de Idol. Van.* has almoſt the ſame Words. But 'tis certain the Apoſtles could bind and torment thoſe who bound and tormented others. And the ſame Power was for ſome Ages continued to the Church; as appears from the ſame Writers: *Hi tamen adjurati per Deum verum a nobis, ſtatim cedunt, & fatentur, & de obſeſſis corporibus exire coguntur; videas illos noſtra voce & operatione Majeſtatis occultæ, flagris cædi, igne torreri, incrementis pœnæ propagantis extendi, ejulare, gemere, deprecari. Et vel exiliunt ſtatim, vel evaneſcunt gradatim, prout fides patientis adjuvat, aut gratia curantis aſpirat,* *Cypr. ibid.* But if the Apoſtles had Power to bind the evil Spirits in this manner, it is not to be imagined, that they could not as eaſily deliver up Offenders to be bound by them.

the Apoſtles, which differs, I think, in nothing but Expreſſion from the former, might be equally given to their remoteſt Succeſſors, acting in the Name of Chriſt and within the Rules of their Duty: only with this Difference, that they were enabled to prove to an unbelieving World, the Validity of the Commiſſion they pretended to, by external and ſenſible Effects, by the Power they had of Releaſing thoſe whom Satan had bound, from their Infirmities; and of Continuing on others the Infirmities they were under, and Inflicting new ones, even Death it ſelf, where the Sin of the Offender, and the Service of the Goſpel made it neceſſary. Which extraordinary Power ſeems not to have ended with the Apoſtles, but to have ſubſiſted for ſome Time together with the other miraculous Gifts, which did not ceaſe, till Things were come to that Maturity, that the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel did no longer want them. But whatever the Words of this Commiſſion preciſely mean, as ſpoken to the Apoſtles, 'tis eaſy to ſee what they do not mean; 'tis eaſy to ſee they do not give the Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, who have not the Gift of diſcerning the Secrets of Mens Hearts, a Power of *remitting* or *retaining* the Sins of this or that individual Perſon abſolutely. This is a Power no Church, not even that of *Rome*, ever claimed; all Sides have confeſſed their Abſolutions to be valid only conditionally, *clave non errante*; that is, upon a Suppoſition only of true Repentance: ſo that the Oppoſers of abſolute Abſolutions, oppoſe a Phantom of their own. When therefore we ſee Men of Senſe combating in earneſt what never was maintained, one cannot help

help ſuſpecting, in Compliment to their Underſtanding, that they have ſome other Meaning, and fight againſt the Shadow of what is not maintained, to oppoſe more effectually what is.

But to proceed, If there be in Scripture ſo plain a Diſtinction of Superiours and Inferiours, of the Brethren and thoſe who have the Rule over them, as I have been contending for; thoſe who are reſolved to diſpute the Ground Inch by Inch, will hope ſtill effectually to puzzle the Cauſe, by demanding a Specification of the Powers claimed, who are the Perſons inveſted with them, and what degree of Submiſſion and Obedience is due to them. I anſwer, as to the Perſons, they are the ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΙ, not taken ſingly, which leads to the wild Scheme of the *Independents*; a Scheme, one would think, invented on Purpoſe to make Chriſtianity appear ridiculous; but acting together, that is, the πρεσβυτέριον, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. the * *Confeſſus Ordinis*, the Eccleſiaſtical Conſiſtory or Senate with their *Biſhop* at their Head, who, with the Presbytery, ſeems to be the ANGEL of the Church, in the ii. and iii. of the *Apoc.* for Presbyters acting without a *Biſhop* to preſide over them, is a new Notion, unknown to all Antiquity, from the firſt Settlement of the Chriſtian Church quite down to the Reformation. Theſe are the ἡγούμενοι, or Rulers, as is plain from Scripture, which knows no ſuch thing as a ſingle, independent Presbyter, but ſpeaks of them always in the Plural Number. As the Presbyters of *Jeruſalem*, *Acts* xi. xv. xxi. of *Epheſus*, *Acts* xx. of the Church, *James* v. Presbyters ordained in every Church, *Acts* xiv. and in

* Tertull. Exh. Caſt. c. 7.

every City, *Tit.* i. And the ſame is meant by the Biſhops of *Philippi*, *Phil.* i. 1. (*f*).

And as to their Powers, what they are; if this could not be diſtinctly ſhewn from Scripture, no more can we know from thence what Powers belong to our Civil Governours; and yet it will be allowed by all, that Obedience to them is commanded in the ſtrongeſt Terms. The Powers in one Caſe, though the Scriptures were ſilent, might in general be deduced from the Nature of their Office and the End of their Inſtitution, as certainly as in the other. And let me add, that it concerns thoſe who are to obey, whether in Spiritual or in Civil Matters, to inform themſelves of their Duty, and conſequently of the Extent of the Authority of thoſe ſet over them, leſt they bring on themſelves the Guilt and Puniſhment of Diſobedience, by refuſing, through a culpable Ignorance, either to God or *Cæſar*, what is due to them.

But to give a more direct Anſwer; the Powers of Church-Governours may, without much Difficulty, be drawn from Scripture, and conſequently the Nature and Degree of the Obedience due to them; partly from the Commiſſions given by our Saviour, partly from the Powers exerciſed by the Apoſtles in planting and governing Churches, and the Inſtructions given to thoſe ſent by them; partly

(*f*) Agreeably hereto we find in the moſt valuable Piece of Antiquity, next the Scriptures, *Clement*'s Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, ¶. 47. αἱ χῆρα ἡ λιαν αἰχρὰ,---- δὶ ἓν ἢ δὺο πρόσωπα ϛασιάζειν πρὸς τὸν ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΥΣ. And, ¶. 54. μονον τὸ ποίμνιον τῦ Χεισῦ εἰρηνεύσε τω μετὰ τῶν καθεσταμένων ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΩΝ. And ¶. 57. ὑποτάγητε τοῖς ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΟΙΣ To inforce which is the Buſineſs of the whole Epiſtle. And who knows not *Tertullian*'s Prælident probati quique SENIORES, *Apol.* c. 39.

ly from the Words denoting the ſeveral Acts of the Authority they uſed; and partly from thoſe that expreſs the Submiſſion due to them. Whoever conſiders and compares theſe together, will not eaſily aſcribe to the Governours of the Church a Power that does not belong to them, or deny any that does.

A ſecond Way of knowing the Powers of Church-Governours, and, I take Leave to ſay, a very proper and neceſſary one, is the Practice of the Church in the firſt and pureſt Ages of it: For though the Scripture be a perfect Rule of Faith, he muſt never have looked into it, who is capable of thinking it a perfect Rule of Worſhip, I mean external Worſhip, and Diſcipline. But he that will take in the Writings of the Primitive Church, as a Supplement to Scripture in theſe Points, cannot be at a Loſs to know what are the Powers of Church-Governours, or what the Obedience due to them.

A third way of determining in this Controverſy, is to be taken from the Nature of Society; for as the Church is a Society, whatever is eſſential to Society, muſt be ſo to the Church. To judge fairly of this, we muſt go back to the Beginnings of the Church, and conſider it in its firſt Formation, and during thoſe Ages in which it ſubſiſted by it ſelf, deſtitute of all Support and Protection from the Civil Powers. This Way of deducing Church-Power is, I confeſs, nicer, and requires more Caution than the other two, and ſhould always be conſidered jointly with them. Otherwiſe we ſhall be apt too forwardly to conclude, that the Church in Fact has ſuch or ſuch a Power, becauſe 'tis in our Opinion convenient it ſhould; and that will

lead

lead us to all the Uſurpations of the Papacy: for if Convenience gives a Right, a Plenitude of Power, a Right not only to meddle in Spirituals, but in all others Matters *in ordine ad Spiritualia*, Infallibility and Perſecution will ſoon be thought not only convenient but neceſſary Claims, and that to the beſt of Purpoſes, to preſerve Unity and root out Hereſy.

If it be objected againſt this Way of deducing Church-Powers, that the State's becoming Chriſtian has made ſo great an Alteration in the Church, as to its external Condition, that it cannot juſtly be inferred, that every thing that was neceſſary for the Church before, is equally and in the ſame Degree neceſſary ſtill; I anſwer, That this Objection does not prove that the ſame Degree of Authority and Power is not ſtill neceſſary for the well governing of the Church; but only that it is not neceſſary that this Power ſhould in every Part of it be ſtill kept in the ſame Hands. With theſe Cautions, and under theſe Reſerves, we may very juſtly argue in behalf of the Church from the Nature of Society.

I know this Way of arguing is violently oppoſed by the Impugners of Church-Authority, and that from theſe two Conſiderations chiefly; one, that the *Kingdom of Chriſt* is not of this World; and the other, that the Church is therefore an *inviſible* Society, and that Arguments from a viſible Society, will not hold to one that is inviſible. But I beg Leave to ſay, that the firſt, though it has been made the Corner-Stone of the new Scheme, is in Truth nothing to the Purpoſe; and in the ſecond, in a Queſtion about the Power of the Miniſtry, is a mere Fiction. Firſt I ſay, that the

Kingdom

Kingdom of Christ, which *John* xviii. 36. is said *not to be of this World*, is not the Church, as is most evident from the Context: in which our Saviour is accused to the *Roman* Governour, as setting up to be King of the *Jews* to the Prejudice of *Tiberius*; our Saviour *who came into the World to bear witness to the Truth*, could not but own what was true; but adds, that his Kingdom was such an one as need give the Emperour no Uneasiness; that it was not of this World; and therefore his Servants used no Force to hinder his being delivered to the *Jews*, much less to disturb his Government. This is the Sense of our Saviour's Answer; but what is this to the Church? But it is not in this Place only, that *Kingdom* does not mean the Church; I will add, nor in any other Place of Scripture. The contrary, I am sensible, is grown to be a very common Opinion, but I will venture to affirm it to be without sufficient Grounds. I cannot enter into the particular Proofs of this here. It may be sufficient to observe at present; *1st*, That if *Church* be put into the Place of *Kingdom*, it will hardly ever make tolerable Sense; and when it seems to do so, the Expression is Elliptical, and the *Gospel* of the Kingdom, or the *Preaching*, or some other like Words, are understood, as any one will see who considers only the xiii. *th.* of St. *Matthew*; where, to a careful Reader, such Supplementary Words will appear absolutely necessary to make out the Analogy between the Kingdom of Christ, and the many things it is compared with in that Chapter. *2dly*, If βασιλεία signifies the Church, 'tis the πλῆθος βασιλεύομενον, the People governed by Christ; whereas in the

Gospel

Gospel it means the Regal Dignity and Power of Christ, and the Majesty with which he will come to judge the World; or the Glory and Happiness attending it, which, in certain Proportions and Degrees, will at the last Day be communicated by him to those who shall be then received into the Heavenly Mansions, as the Reward of their Faith and Love, while Members of his Mystical Body, the Church here on Earth. This is the *Kingdom*; and the *Church* is the Number of the Faithful, *professing* to live in Expectation of it, and daily *praying* for its *coming*.

And as to that other Pretence, the *Invisibility* of the Church, 'tis a mere Fiction; the Church as spoken of in Scripture, is either a particular *visible* Society, or the Collection of them, consider'd as all making one Body. The Church is invisible only by Abstraction, and as such, has no Existence but in the Mind of him that so thinks of it. Nor are the Members of the Church otherwise invisible, than as God alone, who only knows the Hearts of Men, can certainly distinguish between the *sincere Professor* and the *Hypocrite*. The Passage of Scripture, that is with most Colour alledged for the Invisibility of the Church, is in the v. of *Ephesians*, where Men are commanded to *love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and* PRESENT *it to himself a glorious Church.--that it should be* HOLY *and* WITHOUT BLEMISH. And because no visible Church has come up to this Character, 'tis concluded, it must be meant of the Church invisible. But they who argue thus, seem not to consider, that the Scripture represents the Church and its

Members,

Members, not what they are, but what they ſhould be; from whence the Brethren are conſtantly called ἅγιοι, *Saints*, in Oppoſition to the reſt of the World; becauſe ſuch they ſhould be, ſuch they promiſed to be at their Baptiſm, when they ſolemnly renounced the World and all its Luſts. But are the Brethren all in fact ſuch? Or were they ever ſo? Even of the Twelve which our Saviour himſelf choſe, had not one of them a Devil? What Compellations does St. *Paul* give to the Churches he writes to; particularly to the Church of *Corinth* in thoſe very Epiſtles, wherein he finds ſo much Fault with them, and ſo ſeverely reproves them for the many Diſorders they were guilty of? The viſible Churches of *Rome*, *Corinth*, *Epheſus*, *Philippi*, and other Places, did not by any Means come up to the Expreſſions with which he addreſſes his Epiſtles to them; will it therefore be ſaid he wrote to the inviſible Churches of thoſe Places? The Abſurdities of ſuch a Notion will, I dare ſay, be allowed to be but too viſible. But what puts the Senſe of this Paſſage in the *Epheſians* out of doubt, is a parallel Place in the *Coloſſians*, which deſerves the more to be attended to, becauſe theſe Epiſtles were written both at the ſame time, and are ſo alike, that one is an Epitome as it were of the other; *Col.* i. 21. the Apoſtle has theſe Words, *You that were ſometimes alienated---- hath he reconciled in the Body of his Fleſh through Death*, to PRESENT you HOLY and UNBLAMEABLE, and unreproveable in his Sight. The ſame Words in the Original, with the Addition of *unreproveable*, as in the *Epheſians*. And we may with as good Reaſon con-

clude, he ſpeaks here to inviſible Diſciples, as there of an inviſible Church. But ſee what follows, εἴγε ἐπιμένετε, if ſo be *ye continue in the Faith, grounded and ſettled, and be not moved away from the Hope of the Goſpel, which ye have heard*; which Words plainly ſhew, that theſe Deſcriptions St. *Paul* gives of the Church are Repreſentations of what it ſhould be, and what God has done his Part to make it; not Proofs, that it actually is, or ever was ſo perfect, or indeed can be, unleſs the Members of the Church on their Part concur and co-operate with the Grace of God, nor any farther than they do ſo.

The Church therefore is a viſible Society, and as ſuch, it neceſſarily ſuppoſes Government and Subordination of ſome Parts to others, ſince a Multitude where there is no ſuch Order, deſerves any Name rather than that of a Society; much leſs can it be worthy to be called the *Church of God*, as in Scripture it generally is; for as the Apoſtle obſerves, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 33. *God is not the Author of Confuſion*: If it be ſaid, that the Church Catholick is ſuch a Society, where there is no Subordination of the Parts to one another, I anſwer, that particular Churches are in Nature and Time prior to the Church Catholick; that the true Notion of a Church, as a Society, is to be fetched from them; and that the Church Catholick is nothing but the Aggregate or Complex of particular Churches, all ſpreading from the ſame Root, profeſſing the ſame Faith, and united under the ſame Head. But if the Church be a Society, and as ſuch, muſt have Government in it; whatever is neceſſary to be done to

preſerve

preſerve this Society, and to purſue the true Ends of it, the Governours of it, either by themſelves or with the Aſſiſtance of the Civil Magiſtrate, muſt have a Right to do. And from hence the ordering of the publick Worſhip, while unſupported by the State, muſt be in them, and whatever is neceſſary to the Exerciſe of Diſcipline, to keep the Members of the Church to the Duties incumbent on them, as ſuch; and to cenſure Offenders whether in Faith or Manners; upon whom if they may inflict the laſt Puniſhment, Excommunication, all leſſer Degrees of Cenſure muſt needs be included in the ſame Power. And when Offenders are juſtly cut off from the Church, they have Reaſon to think themſelves, while they continue ſuch, cut off alſo from the Favour of God. Since the Goſpel of Chriſt knows no Salvation out of the Church of Chriſt.

But the Adverſaries we have to do with, will perhaps allow there is ſomewhere a proper Authority lodged to appoint Rules of Church-Diſcipline, and to ſettle a Method of publick Worſhip; but they will not allow a Power in any to oblige the Members to conform to it; ſince the Doctrine contained in the Forms of Worſhip may be falſe, and the Conſcience ought not to be forced, and no one can have a Right to impoſe Articles of Faith upon another, but all muſt judge for themſelves. The Queſtion then upon this will be, what Authority the Governours of the Church have in Matters of Faith; or ſince the Scripture is acknowledged to be the Rule of Faith, what Authority they have to interpret Scripture; our Adverſaries deny they have any.

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Now to reſolve this Queſtion rightly, we muſt again have Recourſe to the Beginnings of the Church, and ſee how this Matter ſtood then. And here I am willing to own, that the Miniſters or Governours of the Church in the firſt Times, even the Apoſtles themſelves, as to Matters of Faith and Doctrine, had no Authority but that of Witneſſes; they delivered nothing but what they declared they received, and in purſuance of their Commiſſion, *Mat.* xxviii. 20. taught what they were commanded; and they were enabled to give ſuch Proofs of their Veracity, as made it fit, that an entire Credit ſhould be given to them; and there was a Neceſſity it ſhould be ſo, the Books of the New Teſtament not being then written, by which their Doctrines could be tried. And as the Apoſtles received what they taught, ſo they committed the ſame Doctrine to others, to be faithfully preſerved and taught, and delivered down to thoſe who were to aſſiſt or ſucceed them in the Miniſtry. Thus St. *Paul* to *Timothy*, 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. *The things that thou haſt heard of me among many Witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo.* It was from hence the Teachers of the Word derived the Authority they had as ſuch: They propoſed nothing to be believed or done as neceſſary, but what they had received. Nor did the Apoſtles only and their Succeſſors, and thoſe commiſſioned by them, ground the Truth of what they taught on this, that it was delivered to them: The Belief and Submiſſion required to what was taught immediately by Chriſt himſelf and the Holy Spirit, are required

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on the ſame Account; that they alſo taught what they received. Thus our Saviour, *John* vii. *My Doctrine is not mine, but his that ſent me.* And in the xii Chapter, *I have not ſpoken of my ſelf; but the Father which ſent me, he gave me a Commandment, what I ſhould ſay, and what I ſhould ſpeak.* And Chapter the xiv, *The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which ſent me.* And in the xvii. Chapter, addreſſing himſelf in Prayer to the Father, he ſaith, *I have given to them the Words which thou gaveſt me, and they have received them.* And of the Holy Ghoſt, he ſpeaks thus, Chap. xvi. 13. *When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth; for he ſhall not ſpeak of himſelf, but whatſoever he ſhall hear, that ſhall he ſpeak.* So that the Doctrine of the Goſpel ultimately terminates in God himſelf, as the ſole Author of it; and from thence 'tis ſo often called *his Word*; and for the ſame Reaſon, he that deſpiſeth thoſe ſent by Chriſt, are juſtly ſaid to deſpiſe, not him only, but the Father alſo. As he ſays himſelf to the Seventy, *Luke* x. 16. *He that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.*

Now the Doctrine thus delivered down is the ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία, the τύπος διδαχῆς, the πρὸς τὴν κατ' εὐσέβειαν διδασκαλίαν λόγος, the ὑποτύπωσις ὑγιαινόντων λόγων, the *ſound Doctrine*, the *Form of Doctrine*, the *faithful Word*, the *form of ſound Words*, Expreſſions uſed by St. *Paul*, not to denote a preciſe Form of Words, a ſhort baptiſmal Creed, as ſome have imagined; but the Sum and Subſtance of what it was neceſſary for them to know and teach, *For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the miniſtry,*

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for the edifying of the Body of Christ. This sacred *Depositum* the Successours of the Apostles in the first Ages were careful to preserve with the greatest Exactness and Fidelity. 'Twas for this *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* recur so often to the Succession of Bishops in the Apostolical Churches; it was to prove the Succession of the Doctrine they taught, in Opposition to the Hereticks they wrote against, whose Doctrines could not in like Manner be traced up to any of the Apostles; and consequently, if contrary to what was so delivered, must be false; and if not false, yet they were novel, and for that reason could not be necessary. And happy had it been for the Christian Church, if its Governours in Matters of Faith could have continued to act only the Part of faithful Witnesses; and the Faith *once delivered to the Saints* had been thus preserved free from all Mixtures or Additions. But this was rather to be wished than hoped; the Nature of things will not permit Doctrines to be long preserved pure and uncorrupt in the way of oral Tradition, which after 'tis carried to some Distance from the Fountain-head, insensibly corrupts in humane Hands, through Weakness rather than Design. And if oral Tradition could have preserved the Faith intire, yet who can say, it would have been sufficient for the Maintenance either of the Peace of the Church, or the Purity of the Faith, to have condemned the Inventions of Hereticks, as dangerous Innovations, without inventing themselves new Tests, as Preservatives against them?

What Tradition could not do, could be supplied only by a written Rule, by the Books that compose

poſe the New Teſtament, which are allowed to have been written by Apoſtles or Apoſtolical Men; Men who were either Eye-Witneſſes themſelves of what they wrote, or converſed with thoſe that were ſo; Men under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, which was given to the Church to lead the Teachers of it into all Truth; ſuch were the Writers of thoſe ſacred Books, which were received by the Churches of Chriſt, and acknowledged not only to be true, but to be the Word of God, while the Tradition of the Faith was yet pure and uncorrupt.

But if theſe be received as the Rule of our Faith, 'tis certain 'tis not the Sound of the Words is ſo, but the Senſe of them. But how is this to be certainly known? And who has a Right to interpret Scripture with that Authority, that his Interpretations ought to be ſubmitted to? When we conſider the Diviſions there are among thoſe who agree in acknowledging the Scripture for their Rule, this ſeems to be a very hard Queſtion; and yet upon an impartial View, the Difficulty appears to be more in themſelves than in the Nature of the Thing. For firſt, 'tis only thoſe Parts of Scripture which relate to Matters of Faith, that we want to know the true Senſe of in this Queſtion, where 'tis conſidered as a Rule of Faith. If therefore we are miſtaken in the Senſe of other Parts, our Faith is nevertheleſs ſafe; but theſe are vaſtly the greater number; and the others in compariſon very few. Now of theſe alſo 'tis allowed on all Sides, that many are plain and eaſy to the meaneſt Underſtanding: of the reſt, which are more difficult, the Senſe of them either

either can certainly be determined by the Rules of Construction, the Use of Words, and the Application of those other Helps, by which we are enabled to find out the Sense of other Writings, or it cannot. If it can, from the Time that the Sense of a difficult Place is fully proved and fixed by learned Men, and universally allowed by such, 'tis then no longer to be put into the Number of Places that are difficult, and may with as much Safety and Certainty be argued from, as any other Place of Scripture the most easy: But if the Place be so obscure, and the Words so ambiguous, that the Sense of it cannot be determined with any Certainty; the various Senses 'tis capable of, either are agreeable to other plain Places of Scripture, or not. If they are agreeable to such, there is no Inconvenience in so understanding them; if they are not, nothing as necessary to be believed, ought to be deduced from them; and in either Case, such Passages, strictly speaking, are of no use to the forming a Summary of Faith in the Judgment of the Reformed Churches at least, who, as they acknowledge the Scriptures for a perfect Rule, so they agree in declaring, that every thing necessary to Salvation is plainly and expressly contained in them, or is very clearly deducible from them. And were the Reformed Churches true to this Principle, there would be little Occasion to dispute about the Right of interpreting.

But if even such difficult Passages must be brought into Controversies of Faith, the Sense of which cannot otherwise be determined, we have a safe way of Interpreting them, if we consult the

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Primitive Writers of the Church, and ſee what Senſe they took them in: for though they are not infallible Interpreters, they are no ill Guides; and if the Senſe they put on a Place be not the true one, 'tis at leaſt a good one, ſince they give it in Defence and Explication of the Common Faith, not to ſupport novel and peculiar Tenets of their own: So that we learn from them at leaſt the Faith of the Church, if not the literal Senſe of the Place. But this Deference to their Interpretation I claim only with theſe two Limitations; firſt, That it is with Reſpect to ſome Article of Faith; And ſecondly, That the Senſe of the Place cannot otherwiſe be fixed: For if it can, could all the Fathers be ſuppoſed to agree in a different Senſe, it would be of no Weight. And thus much, I preſume, will be allowed to the antient Writers of the Church by all, but thoſe who contemn what they have never read, and therefore expreſs ſo much Contempt, to excuſe their Ignorance.

But to return to the Queſtion, Who ſhall interpret? I anſwer, not a ſingle Paſtor by his mere Authority, but in every Church the Governours of it, aſſiſted by the beſt Lights they can get, and with a particular Regard to the Senſe of the primitive Church where it can be had. Theſe muſt have a Right to interpret, ſo far as is neceſſary to appoint certain Forms of ſound Words, for the Admiſſion of Members into the Church, or for the Inſtruction of Catechumens, or the Direction of Teachers, or for the profeſſing the true Faith in the publick Worſhip, and the like Caſes. But are they obliged to ſubmit to ſuch

Summaries or Profeſſions of Faith, who think ſomething to be profeſſed in them that is not true? I anſwer, that wiſe and good Governours will bring nothing into them that has not a good Foundation both in Scripture and Antiquity. And that we ought to preſume ſo of our Governours till we know the contrary, and ſhould not without the greateſt Modeſty and Diſtruſt of our ſelves, cenſure their Doctrine as erroneous; much leſs form a Schiſm, and diſſent in important Points of Faith: For cauſeleſs Schiſms are heinous Sins, and there are capital Errours in Faith, as well as unpardonable Irregularities in Life; accordingly we ſee St. *Paul* delivered to Satan not only the inceſtuous *Corinthian*, but *Hymenæus* and *Alexander* alſo, whoſe Crime was that they ſubverted the Faith by denying the Reſurrection, 1 *Tim.* i. 20. But if the Caſe ſhould be ſo, that the Governours of the Church ſhould either decree falſe Doctrine, or ſuch as is juſtly and for good Reaſons to be ſuſpected, they then abuſe and exceed their Commiſſion; and 'tis commendable and our Duty, or lawful at leaſt, not to conform to them.

But it may happen that the Governours are in the right in what they have appointed; but ſome of their Flock are ſtrongly perſuaded they are not; muſt they conform againſt their Perſuaſion? No. Will their Perſuaſion juſtify their Nonconforming? No, nor excuſe it neither, unleſs it be ſincere; and no Perſuaſion is ſincere in ſuch a Senſe as will excuſe a Separation, that is not the Reſult of a fair and due Examination, and the uſe of all proper Means. And I think I may

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without Breach of Charity ſuppoſe, that the Perſuaſions of the ſeveral Sects that diſſent from the eſtabliſhed Church, are not thus ſincere; though, if I am not greatly miſtaken, it has been to excuſe or rather juſtify their groundleſs Diſſentions, that ſo much Weight has by ſome Writers been laid upon Sincerity, as if it were not only a neceſſary Qualification of other Duties, but would be accepted by God in lieu of them.

The Reſult then of the Caſe is this; thoſe who have Authority, or rather whoſe Duty it is to watch over the Faith, and appoint publick Forms, which are always ſuppoſed to be agreeable to Scripture, have a Right to interpret Scripture in order to the compoſing of ſuch Forms; and if there be not great Reaſon to think they are miſtaken, 'tis the People's Duty to ſubmit to them; except there be in any an invincible Perſuaſion to the contrary; which can hardly ever be the Caſe where Governours keep within their proper Bounds. For if what they teach or decree, be true, it cannot be very difficult to prove it ſo to ſuch as ſhall in their Doubts apply to them for Satisfaction; for what is of ſuch a Nature, as cannot be proved to be true to a reaſonable Man, no Body, I believe, will ſay, ought to be enjoined.

This I ſay as to Matters of Faith, about which there are the moſt Scruples, and where 'tis confeſſed Governours are ſtrictly obliged to adhere to Scripture. As to Matters of external Worſhip and Diſcipline, there, as I intimated before, Governours have a greater Latitude. A divine Revelation is not neceſſary for the Appoint-

ment of all the Parts of them. 'Tis plain St. *Paul* himself in some of the Directions he gives, grounds them not upon any Command of the Lord, but upon the Custom of the Church; 1 *Cor.* xi. 16. *But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.* And 'tis demonstrable the Scripture is not a perfect Rule in these Cases from the same Chapter, which the Apostle concludes with these Words, *The rest will I set in order when I come,* τὰ λοιπὰ διατάξομαι. Some things therefore wanted to be set in order, about which there are no written Directions. So again, *Tit.* i. 5. *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting.* In these Points therefore Governours are at Liberty to do what they judge most expedient, and most for Edification, in virtue of that known Rule, which is not so much an Apostolical Precept, as the Dictate of common Sense, *let all things be done decently and in order.* Thus I have shewn at large, that the Church, as well as other Societies, has its Governours, that as such they have certain Powers belonging to them, and that their Flocks are bound to obey and submit to them, so long as they pursue the Ends of their Commission.

If I have passed over two Popular Objections made to Church Power by its Enemies, as if it encroached upon the Authority of the Magistrate, and the Liberty of the People, 'tis not that I have forgot them, but because I cannot but slight them, as very trifling; since all that is urged on these Heads is Harangue, not Argument, and is an Appeal not to the Sense of Men, but to their Passions.

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As Church Governours are never called in Scripture ἀρχαὶ or ἐξουσίαι, nor are said κυριεύειν or ἐξουσιάζειν, but are expresly forbid to do so by our Saviour; so 'tis well known, no sound Part of the Christian Church, and in particular not the Church of *England*, ever claimed any Part of Temporal or Civil Power, as of divine Right, or by any other Title than the Favour of wise and religious Princes and States. They call themselves *Ministers* not *Magistrates*, and their Rule *Canons*, not *Laws*; they claim not *Dominion* but *Direction*, Spiritual *Discipline* not Coercive *Jurisdiction*. They decline in common Language to speak even of Christ as *King*, that they might give no Umbrage to the Rulers of this World, as if they acknowledged no other: They preach him as *Lord*, and themselves *Servants* for his Sake. And as for the Liberty of the People, Christ neither gave any, nor took any away, he left all Men in the State he found them, except as to a Liberty from Sin; (for that other from the Yoke of the Law, concerns *Jews* only;) but he expected those who would be his Disciples, should obey his Commands, and consequently those Persons, by whom they were to be made known to them, who were to teach and instruct them in Righteousness. And what Liberty is taken away by the Ministers of the Gospel acting thus, I am at a Loss to see.

There are indeed Times and Places, in which Spiritual Power exceeds its Bounds; and the Rights both of Prince and People are invaded: but sure there never was less Occasion for such Complaints, than in this Age and in this Nation; where the Christian Laity as such, have all the Liberty the most

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licentious can desire, a great deal more than is consistent with good Discipline. What then can be the Meaning of those loud Harangues in behalf of the Ecclesiastical Liberty of the People, when no body is touching it? Is it not the same as of the like Harangues in Vindication of their Civil Liberties, under a mild and just and gentle Government? But whatever they mean, all their Efforts will, I doubt not, be in vain: the Goodness of the Constitution, through the divine Blessing, will still support it: 'Tis secure in the Affections of the People, who love the Church too well, not to be jealous of those who would flatter them into a Dislike of it: 'Tis safe in the Protection of good Laws, and in the Justice and Wisdom of a PRINCE, who has very lately declared, *he has its honour and security near at heart.* And under the KING, we have the Happiness to have at the Head of the Church a PRIMATE, who governs in *the Meekness of Wisdom*, and can be zealous for the Truth without breathing Persecution; who can distinguish between a charitable Indulgence, and an indolent Indifference; between conniving at the Mistakes of virtuous and learned Men, who when they err, err in Sincerity, and write with Modesty, and setting the Doors wide open to the bold Insults of Libertines and Atheists, and the no less pernicious ones of ignorant Enthusiasts, and such Deceivers who shelter themselves under their Cover. In a Word, who knows a just Authority may be maintained without pretending to Infallibility; that our Establishment, though imperfect as 'tis human, may and ought to be defended as a very good one; and

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as to any Defects in it, that ſome Things may be altered without giving up every Thing, and the Conſtitution mended without ſubverting it. That this Church may for ever be eſtabliſhed in Purity and Peace, and triumph over all its Enemies in the Wiſdom, Piety and Charity of its Spiritual and Civil Governours, and in the willing Obedience of its Members, grounded in the true Faith, and zealous of good Works,

God of his infinite Mercy grant through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be all Honour, Glory and Power, now and ever.

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